

# Chicago Fire Media Conference

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

## Raphael Wicky

Press Conference



**Q. With the playoff format that was announced for the east with ten teams advancing in one form or another, how much pressure does that add to you guys to at least qualify for that and what would it mean to the club to make it into the playoffs at this point?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, obviously that is our biggest goal obviously. We want to go into the playoffs and we have ten teams, even with the number of points right now, we are obviously not happy. There is clearly a few points missing. We are still in the race, and I saw a lot of progress over the last games from my team, so I am convinced that we have the quality that we can reach these playoffs. That is the goal, and then you know better -- you guys know better than me that once you reach the playoffs, everything is possible here.

But that doesn't really add more pressure. It's just a goal we have in a difficult year for everyone and a difficult year for us, and a weird year, obviously, but yeah, that's the goal we have to qualify for the playoffs and then see game by game.

**Q. Just wondering if we can get an update on Djordje Mihailovic's ankle. Looked like he might be in training this week in the video the club sent out and C.J.'s fitness, is he up to full soccer fitness at this point do you think?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: The status is Djordje trained. He trained all week with the team. He should be fine. C.J. is also with the team? He is fit. He looks good in training. Obviously he has missed about five to six weeks. So to your question, no, he's probably not full-fit for 90 minutes, but he's clearly there and clearly can help us for a small amount of time for sure.

**Q. With the stated goal of making the playoffs in mind, how crucial is next week with three games in about nine days?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: It is very important obviously. It is very

important that we now trace forth our, so far, good performances, at least New England was a good performance. I think Columbus was a good performance, a very good performance in a lot of ways that, we now get points; we actually reward ourselves and get points.

So the week is very important. Yeah, but I'm usually not planning too much ahead. I'm really trying to take game by game, talking with my team game by game and the most important is tomorrow at Orlando and we prepare the next games at home, but obviously the home games are important. We were disappointed with not having more than one point against New England and Columbus.

**Q. What do you think this team needs to do to find a 90-minute performance, because there have been some bright moments of football in the last couple weeks. What do you think is missing or how do you guys strive for that complete performance to help get three points rather than saying, okay, great, we had a great 20-minute stretch?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Look, I think it's a little bit of everything. You have to improve on everything. I'm talking with you guys often after the games, and there is moments, for example, I was very happy how the team managed the first half against Columbus. We were 2-0 up and clearly under pressure. Columbus is a very good team. They pushed with lots of set pieces but we managed to go with a clean sheet into halftime. So it's about managing games. It's about managing the moments of the games, and then again, it's about the second half, we clearly have chances to kill the game. It's about, yeah, you're 2-1 up. They are pushing. They have more possession and you have huge chances. You need to kill that game.

So it's a little bit of everything. Keep doing that. Keep trying to then actually convert our chances into goals, which we had, and then it's, again, we come back to the management of the game. There is like six, seven minutes left with 2-1 up. We didn't kill the game. They are obviously pushing forward and put another tall striker in, which means they will push forward, maybe with long balls, and then you need to manage the game and actually say, okay, then we going to take a 2-1 victory home and going to fight now for every single ball and not going to concede anything. Those are the little moments where I think we have to be more mature and we have to be better in

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managing the games.

. It's a mix of everything. There's not only one topic that we need to be better, but like I said, there's a lot of good things. We created against a leader of the whole league, so many big, big chances, and we should have won that game.

But yeah, those are the points we have to get better.

**Q. You're playing tomorrow night in Orlando which is welcoming a limited number of fans to their home games. Just a couple things on that. Is that fair competitive-wise, like you guys aren't obviously welcoming fans but Orlando is? And what's your opinion of playing in front of fans when the coronavirus is still not exactly controlled right now?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, look, talk about fair, I think this year we shouldn't really talk about fair in the competition. We are all happy that the league is played and that we have games, and so I don't think we should talk about fair or not fair. I don't see it as advantage if there is fans.

I think it was weird in the beginning for the players to play without fans, and now if there will be fans, I think everyone, players will be happy to have a little bit of noise and real noise and fans in the stadium, but I don't really think that it's a big disadvantage. I mean, we are not indoor in front of 85,000 people where they have a huge crowd and they push a team; we are not there. It's nice to have people there.

On your second point, look, we have decided here with our club to play without fans so far, and we are fully supportive of that. Me as a head coach, I will be supportive whatever decision the club will make in the future. The safety of the people is the most important. If for a reason the club decide we will now allow fans, then I will support that because I will trust that they actually do the right decision. If we decide no, guys, we don't do that, we will support that. I think that is what I'm going to do.

**Q. Next Wednesday will be the team's first time playing at Soldier Field after the Chicago Bears have played an American football game. What concerns does the club have about the condition of the playing surface, especially as your two seasons start overlapping more and more?**

RAPHAEL WICKY: Yeah, you guys tell me. I don't know, you have probably already experienced that in the early years of Chicago Fire; I have never, so I can't give you an answer to that, and also, it's out of my control.

Usually a field is pretty beaten up after an American football game but there is people who will work on the field, so we just have to trust these people that they put the field in a good shape, and all the rest is -- I can't do anything against that. If it's going to be a bad field, then it's going to be a bad field and we play on that bad field. There's nothing me as a head coach I can do right now, and I am not losing, actually, too much energy on that.

It's going to be a first for me, as well. I'm going to be looking forward to see how it is.

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